

Tips for parents on managing holiday stress

The holidays can be a stressful time for parents, especially if you're worried about how you'll manage buying holiday gifts and creating festive experiences for your family. The American Psychology Association has these following suggestions on managing holiday stress.

For many of us, the holiday season can bring an increased sense of family responsibility and, along with that, additional feelings of stress. Advertisements and Hallmark movies about the joys of the season can seem lost on us as we scurry about trying to do even more than usual. It's easy to feel overwhelmed.

Unfortunately, we may turn to unhealthy stress management behaviors such as overindulging in eating or drinking to keep things going, or skimping on sleep. These actions don't help and often make us feel worse. There are better, healthier, and longer-lasting techniques we can use to make holiday stress – and other stress times – more manageable. These include the following:

1. *Strengthen social connections* – We know that strong, supportive relationships help us manage all kinds of challenges. So, we can view the holidays as a time to reconnect with the positive people in our lives. Accepting help and support from those who care about us can help alleviate stress. Also, volunteering at a local charity on our own or with family can be another way to make connections; helping others often makes us feel better too.
2. *Initiate conversations about the season* – It can be helpful to have conversations with our kids about the variety of different holiday traditions our families, friends, and others may celebrate. Parents can use this time as an opportunity to discuss how some families may not participate in the same holiday traditions as others. Not everyone needs to be the same. It is important to teach open-mindedness about others and their celebrations.



Important Dates

School closes for Winter Break on December 22nd and reopens on January 4th. There is no NYA Dec. 23-Jan. 3

**Early Release
Wed. Dec. 8th**

NYA begins at 11 AM following early dismissal. If your child is attending NYA on that day, please be sure to send a lunch as food services will be closed.



3. *Set expectations* – It is helpful to set realistic expectations for gifts and family activities. Depending upon a child’s age, we can use this opportunity to teach kids about the value of money and responsible spending. We need to remember to pare down our own expectations, too. Instead of trying to take on everything, we need to identify the most important holiday tasks and take small concrete steps to accomplish them.

My wife and I helped set our kids expectations by telling them that Santa brings each child one gift, that the others come from mom and dad. This allowed us to splurge on “Santa’s gift” while keeping our two children’s expectations realistic and helped us stay within budget. We were also able to tell our daughter that Santa couldn’t bring her a horse since reindeer and horses don’t get along with one another. (Have fun making up stuff for your own family!)

4. *Keep things in perspective* – On the whole, the holiday is short. It helps to maintain a broader context and a longer-term perspective. We can ask ourselves, what’s the worst thing that could happen this holiday? Our greatest fears may not happen, and, if they do, we can tap our strengths and the help of others to manage them. There will be time after the holiday season to follow up or do more of things we’ve overlooked or did not have time to do during the holidays.
5. *Take care of ourselves* – It is important that we pay attention to our own needs and feelings during the holiday season. We can find fun, enjoyable, and relaxing activities for ourselves and our families. By keeping our minds and bodies healthy, we are primed to deal with stressful situations when they arise. Consider cutting back television for kids and getting the family out together for fresh air and a winter walk. Physical activity can help us feel better and sleep well, while reducing sedentary time and possible exposure to stress-inducing advertisements. After all, how many times can we see the wife taking the black pick-up truck that her husband and bought form himself!



Please put your child’s name in clothing they might remove while at NYA, i.e., coats, sweatshirts, mittens, gloves, hats, scarves, winter boots, etc. If there is a name in them, we can reunite the clothing with your child. Use a marker to write their name on a label, get preprinted labels and iron them in, etc. It would be a shame if a child were to lose a holiday gift from Santa, parents, grandparents... We also request that you put their name on water bottles. We would love to have a completely empty lost and found basket. Thank you!